

Duxbury's early settlers: Pilgrim Henry Samson

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The land grant that Henry Samson and his family got in the 1627 Plymouth Second Division most of us know as the area on Washington Street where the Battelle Laboratory and the Winsor House are, but the Samson family sold most of it off over 200 years ago and settled in other parts of town where they flourished.



BY LAMONT "MONTY" HEALY

Henry Samson, aged 16, arrived in Plymouth

aboard the Mayflower in 1620. He was in the company of his cousin Ann and her husband Edward Tilley. Henry married Anne Plummer in 1635/6; they eventually had nine children, five daughters and four sons. Although the birth dates of their children are not known, what is known is that by 1650 they had seven children. In January of 1637/8 they had one son, Stephen, and probably one or two other children.

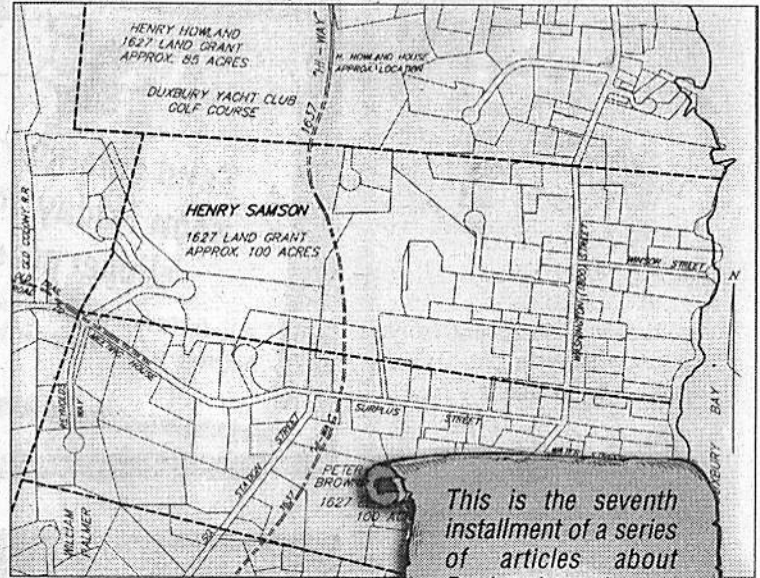
The Plymouth Colony records show "the overplus on the south side of the lands besides Henry Howland's three shares is graunted unto Henry Sampson, to belong to his lott." The fact that this grant was termed "overplus" leads me to believe that the Colony leaders did not know how many acres were in it. This "overplus" seems to have amounted to about 100 acres, because that is the acreage between Henry Howland's and Peter

Browne's grants. Although the Plymouth Second Division was recorded in 1627, it took several years for the lots to be "set off" (surveyed).

Henry served on many grand juries, as an arbiter, as a surveyor and on a coroner's jury on the body of John Paybody, most likely to determine the cause of death. He also served the Town of Duxbury as a constable and as the tax collector.

Perhaps because of his civic duties and his burgeoning family, Henry was granted land in the Duxbury Commons at the head (west end) of his grant; land in Cokesett (Dartmouth); land on the westerly side of the Namasskett River (Middleborough or Lakeville); and 50 acres with some meadow at the North River. The Namasskett River property may have been in Lakeville because the intersection of routes 105 and 18 is called Samson-Corner. One nifty little phrase relating to the land in Dartmouth was found in a 1684 deed in which Henry Samson sold to Joseph Russell "all that my fifty acres of upland, with four acres of meadow adjoining, with one-eighth part of one whole share of undivided land excepting 25 acres and one-thirtieth part of undivided land sold out of the said eighth part of undivided lands." What? This is what makes surveyors earn their keep!

Edward and Ann (Henry's cousin) Tilley died in their first year at Plymouth (1621). Though the Tilley name has substantially disappeared lo-



This is the seventh installment of a series of articles about Duxbury's early settlers, using land records and other historical documents.

cally, the Samson/Sampson name has flourished not only locally but all over the country. The Samson Kindred is an active organization that publishes a newsletter three times a year and meets in Plymouth every third year. I estimate that there might be more than two million people sharing the blood line (and that's using two to three children for each adult child when there could be more).

At the time of Henry's death in 1684/5 the "homestead farm" in Duxbury, comprising about 150 acres including the original grant, the Commons grant, and 33 acres purchased from Peter Browne's daughter, was left to Henry's eldest son, Stephen. In his will Henry left the rest of the Dartmouth land to his three eldest sons, Stephen, John and James. Henry's youngest son, Caleb, was given one shilling, although he may have been provided with some land during his father's lifetime. Henry's five

daughters were married and received some money and no land, as was the custom at the time.

In 1713 Stephen Samson deeded to "my two sons" Benjamin and John "all that farm where I now dwell ... given to me by my honored father Henry Samson." In 1728 Benjamin deeded to John "one half of ye whole" of the property.

John Samson deeded the "homestead farm" to his son Elijah in 1757, and Elijah deeded it to his son Stephen in 1804. So, with Stephen's ownership the "homestead farm," although not containing its original acreage, was kept in the family name for more than 160 years.

In 1781 the Elijah mentioned above deeded "all my real estate lying in Duxbury"

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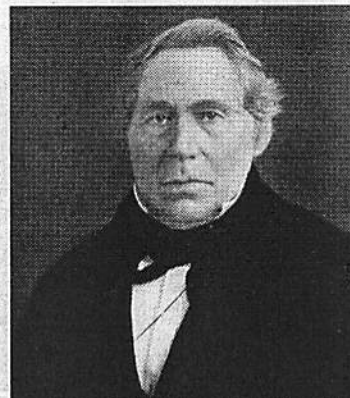
to his nephew, Cornelius Samson. Then in 1785 Cornelius deeded the northeast portion (30 acres) of the farm to Samuel Winsor and Lot Stetson. Cornelius had also deeded property to Jonathan Delano on the southeasterly side of the grant. Then on the same date he deeded the rest of the property back to Elijah. Elijah then deeded the same property to Gamaliel Bradford, who then deeded it back to Elijah. I can only assume that these were mortgages. I think that mortgages were not as clear as they are today; my guess is that Cornelius and Gamaliel lent Elijah money, and when he paid it back they deeded the property back to him.

Stephen Samson who owned a small portion of the "homestead" in 1804 sold the northeast part of it to Bradford Samson in 1808, and that property passed to Bradford Samson, Jr. and then to his heirs, and eventually to Flora L. Taylor. Flora, at age 88, had

to provide an affidavit stating that she was "the only heir-at-law of Benjamin O. Cummings ... I have lived on the premises, described in said deed, for the past 75 years and since the death of my father."

For the most part, the Samsons were no longer living on Henry's original grant, but they did live in other parts of town and adjacent towns. For this reason I'd like to relate some Samson family or Samson house stories.

Almost 100 years after the sales to the Winsors and Delanos. (1876), Captain Elisha Sampson, Jr. (not to be confused with Henry's grandson Elijah) who lived next door to his father on Tremont Street east of Mill Brook, was shot and killed at his breakfast table by his son Siméon, "a lad of nineteen ... who is subject to fits of insanity" as reported by the Boston Globe. Another tragedy occurred next door in Elisha Sampson, Sr.'s house when in 1809 Charles W. Boomer, whose wife said,



Levi Sampson, builder and owner of the brig "Sampson" (1812). The ship was captained by his relative Briggs Sampson.

"it was very sad ... they were eating supper and he always did like rice, but he just got up, went in the other room and shot himself." Mr. Boomer was the father of Charles Boomer, Duxbury's only WWI casualty, for whom Boomer Square opposite the town hall is named.

See part two of this story in next weeks edition. Check out Monty's blog at duburyspilgrimsandtheirland.com.